call off your ghost

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/26608630.

Rating:
Explicit

Archive Warning:
No Archive Warnings Apply

Category:
M/M

Fandom:
Supernatural

Relationships:
Lee Webb/Dean Winchester, Castiel/Dean Winchester (implied) - Relationship

Characters:
Dean Winchester, Lee Webb, John Winchester

Additional Tags:
Internalized Homophobia, Gay Panic, coming to terms with sexuality, Bisexual Dean Winchester, Pre-Series Dean Winchester, Pre-Series, John Winchester's A+ Parenting, Coming of Age, self discovery, Atmospheric, Suicide Mention (Side Character), Ritualistic Murder Mention, Cult Mention, Angst, Season/Series 15 Spoilers, Episode: s15e07 Last Call

Language:
English

Stats:
Published: 2020-09-23 Completed: 2020-11-03 Words: 10,821 Chapters: 4/4

call off your ghost

by sleepinnude

Summary

The thing about being twenty-two and more-or-less on your own and killing honest to god monsters with your best friend, is that you start to think you might actually be invincible.

Dean has always been the heartbreaker so he never thought to look out for his own heart along the way.

Notes

i guess this is a thing???
i blacked out and wrote this in the past 24-hours. it's mostly finished & i'll probably be posting once a week.

titles all from dessa's *call off your ghost*

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1: prologue: if we're careful we can do this all our lives

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dean's going on twenty-three and drunk when he kisses a boy for the first time.

It's been maybe six months gone since Dad and Sam had that last screaming fight, since Dean last saw Sammy. He's called a few times -- Well. He's dialed a few times, from pay phones, without putting any money in. The dial tone just droned in that stilted beat, waiting for change. (Dean wasn't even sure the number was right, anyway.)

It's been about two months since they joined up with Lee Webb again.

Dean likes Lee -- Dean *loves* Lee. They get on like a pile of salted bones on fire and even if they didn't it's nice to have someone his age around, someone other than his younger brother. And there's something about Lee that inspires a sort of awe in Dean.

They first met when Dean was fifteen and Lee was sixteen, but he had been running with a little circle of hunters with more than ten years on him. He's an orphan, parents killed by monsters like so many hunters down the line. Shuffled from his grandparents to his uncle to another cousin who didn't care much when Lee kept disappearing to a roadhouse that was a hunter's hub. So he's not even a full year older than Dean but there's something in the set of his shoulders that makes him seem older. (Maybe Dean is just wide-eyed at someone living his own life by his own terms.)

But then, all lost boys follow someone through Neverland and Lee looks at Dean's dad like he's got all the answers. So they're two boys running roughshod, fighting hard for affection from the man driven to edges by the path to revenge. With Lee there, John goes a little wilder -- another pair of eyes, another set of hands holding a machete is an insurance. He doesn't have to look out for Dean much at all, but now he really doesn't because Dean and Lee have each other's backs. (Dean learns how to set a broken bone on Lee. Lee learns how to stitch up a gaping wound on Dean. They both learn, quick, the shiver and retch of infection setting in.)

It's not as dark, or dangerous as you might think, though. Not all the time.

They're still boys, in their early-twenties, more or less left to their own devices when John doesn't need them. Lee teaches Dean trick shots on billiard tables in running-down bars. Dean shows Lee how to spot a tell on even the shadiest of poker players. They drink crappy beer and crappier whiskey and they sing loud and unabashed along to the "Heartland's Best" tape from the Impala, imitating the twang of the mandolin as the wind rushes through the windows. When there's a motel room, they flip channels until they find an Indiana Jones or Star Wars or western and then shove each other, trying to beat each other to the best lines. (Lee usually lets Dean have John Wayne's. Lee likes Han Solo's best. Neither of them can do a passable Chewbacca, but that doesn't stop them from trying.)

And, tonight, John is due to be off for a few days in a row, chasing ghosts. They're posted up in a motel room with too much time and just as much whiskey. And that's after the bartender gave them free shots of Jager because she liked Dean's smile.

Lee is teasing him about that, squeezing Dean's face in one big hand and making his lips purse out a little, talking about Dean's pretty eyes and pretty lips. He's got his voice all high in falsetto, so it's a joke, but then he stops talking and stops laughing. Time slows in that way it sometimes does when Dean is drunk and then it speeds up and he can't be sure how long he and Lee have been staring at each other, Lee's hand still wrapped around Dean's face. His face and Lee's hand are both warm, so warm, but they've been drinking and the motel's heater must be working overdrive even through the November chill.

Finally, Dean laughs, too loud, and shoves Lee off him. "You're just jealous," he taunts, "'cause she liked me better'n you!" But there's a block of blush over his cheeks and nose and his stomach is off-balance and Lee is still just looking at him, eyes kinda glazed over.

This isn't the first time something like this has happened, is the thing.

They'll catch eyes in the rearview mirror. Lee's fingers will rest on Dean's as they pass around guns or knives. Their socked feet nudge while watching Harrison Ford through motel static. Lee shoves the last of the fries toward Dean even though he has to be just as hungry. Dean watches the swell of Lee's bottom lip around a beer bottle and Lee sees him and lets him look. (Then. Once. Just once. They had to bunk up together and Dean woke in the middle of the night to Lee's

arm around his middle, the warm point of his nose fit against the back of Dean's neck. They were separated by morning.)

So Dean isn't going on nothing, exactly, when he shifts a half-inch closer. He still disguises it as a drunken falter, just in case, but his heart is only beating double-time, not triple.

Lee takes the moment, lets his hand drop to the middle of Dean's chest. The necklace Sammy gave Dean forever ago catches between the beat of his heart and Lee's rough palm. Time kaleidoscopes again and they're kissing.

It's not great.

It's not great in the way that two boys in their early twenties, drunk and exhausted and wired, kissing each other for the first time isn't going to be great. Lee wears his hair long and some of it has gotten caught between their mouths, Dean's nose slots and squishes against Lee's cheek and the taste of shit-beer, Jager, and some bottom-barrel red label is overpowering.

Despite all that, Dean's breathing punches through him and his head is spinning in a distinctly not-drunken way and all he can think about is pressing closer, is Lee's hand on his sternum, is the feeling that drops, liquid hot, through his stomach.

When they break apart, Dean holds still. He keeps his eyes shut and he braces for the punch, for the laughter, for the crash of reality around his ears. Dean's no slouch but Lee can definitely take him in a fight so if it comes to that Dean is looking at more than just a black-eye, likely.

It doesn't come.

Dean's eyes open on Lee flailing as he tries to get out of his shirt, curses muffled by the tangle of fabric. Dean rushes to catch up, the rolled-up cuffs of his flannel giving him grief. They don't look at each other as they struggle. They don't laugh or grin shy or ebb back toward each other.

Not until the next seconds, once they're out of their shirts. They crash back together and Lee isn't gentle - which is fine. Dean isn't expecting gentle. He's not stupid. He's not expecting -- This isn't romance, is the thing. Dean isn't daydreaming about laying side-by-side, trading kisses, making eyes at each other, Lee's fingers in his hair. He's not stupid.

(It's just that, Dad always said that you can't keep anyone, in this life, but Lee is a hunter too, so if there were to ever be anyone -- But Dean's not stupid. He knows better than to hope. To even think.)

There's teeth and tongue and Dean finds he really likes the way his voice sounds, whiskey-rough and slurred, from Lee's mouth. In little moments, he lets himself get sloppy -- the fan of Lee's eyelashes over his cheeks, the hitch Lee's breath gives when Dean groans out his pleasure, the tender curve between Lee's shoulder and neck. (Dean loves giving hickeys, loves getting hickeys. And it's not some stupid, teenage-boy conquest thing, though, he pretends it is. He likes to breathe and breathe and listen and breathe. But it goes without saying that he and Lee aren't marking each other up, as not-careful as they're being.)

In the end, it's just hands shoved into jeans, belt buckles clattering and foreheads not quite touching. Lee's hand is big against Dean and Dean's fingers are clever around Lee and neither of them lasts more than a few minutes once they get on each other.

Dean knows better than to dip forward into the distance between them for a kiss after.

There's something thick in the room as they drift, laying side-by-side the wrong-way on the motel bed. In the background, John Wayne's Ethan Edwards drawls out, "That'll be the day." Dean mouths along to the next line: *Let's ride.*

Next to him, Lee heaves himself off the bed, shuffles to the bathroom, and closes the door. A moment later, Dean hears the water run -- he strains, but can't hear anything more.

Scrambling, he scrubs at his stomach with his discarded shirt, shoves their clothes to the floor in a heap, and sinks under the covers of the other bed. When Lee comes out, the light is off and Dean has his back to him, feigning sleep. He listens, counts Lee's breaths, doesn't fall asleep until he does.

Chapter End Notes

rebloggable here!

please let me know what you think! response tells me that people care which makes me edit/post faster!

Chapter 2: one: one of us got clumsy, both of us got wise

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Dean is pretty sure that they're either in Idaho or Washington by now. Which is more north and more west than they generally stray but they're en-route to North Cascades, tales of missing persons coming back as ghosts to lure loved ones to their death. John has been turning over what they know about the area and which monsters it could be, but the problem is that most of the lore about anything in that region originates from Native American stories, and there's nothing that white people like to fuck up beyond recognition like Native American lore.

Either way, John is pretty sure it's this thing called a bukwus -- freaky skeletal spirit that lures people into the water to drown them, or trick them into eating his food so they're trapped in the spirit world. Lee grins when John identifies it, calls it the *Wildman of the Wood* with a whoop in his voice, and if Lee is stoked then Dean thinks it'll probably be a good time.

"How do you kill it?" Dean asked, twisting to look at Lee in the backseat.

Lee gave him another grin, too many teeth. "Nobody knows."

John laughed but didn't correct him so Dean figures they're gonna have to try a little of everything. That idea energized his dad and Lee. Dean thinks maybe it's excitement thrumming through his veins too, hopes that he can pretend as much. Mostly, he's half wishing that his father had caught another clue on the demon hunt instead, then it could've been just him and Lee, camped down in some motel again.

Dean doesn't know if he likes hunting - hard to tell when you've never really done anything else. He likes it better than he liked school, that's for sure. But knows for damn sure that he likes being in bed with Lee better.

They've only been there once more, since that first time. The first few days after that were awkward and then John called and said he'd be back by the next day and Dean saw his window closing. That night,

they were sitting side-by-side, watching Roadhouse for the tenth time, and Dean reached out, caught Lee by the collar and pulled him in. Since then it's been...awkward, but not in the same way. It's been tender, like a cut in your mouth that aches when you tongue against it, but you can't help exploring it.

Lee smiles, now, when he catches Dean looking and when they trade around weapons, his fingers linger over Dean's a second too long to be an accident. They haven't been forced to share a bed yet but Dean is waiting for the excuse.

But for now, they're at some no-name diner (literally - the lettering on the awning just read "DINER") in Idaho or maybe Washington state catching breakfast. John is rambling a little about lakes and bays and mountains and his overall displeasure for the Pacific Northwest.

Lee keeps peering over the rim of his coffee mug, passing smiles to Dean whenever John gets particularly riled up. Like they're in on a secret together or something. And, well, Dean guesses they are.

"Didn't you have some hunt up here when we kids, Dad?" Dean asks, egging his father on for Lee's amusement. "Someone saw Bigfoot?" And that really gets John started -- about yuppie hikers who can't tell a bear when they see one and start misreporting, getting everyone all excited for no reason.

Lee coughs, which sounds suspiciously like a laugh, and ducks his head over his plate of french toast.

John goes on about that case a little longer. Dean doesn't remember it all that well. He was only about eleven at the time. Plus it was right after Wisconsin, after the shtriga, after Dean almost let Sammy get killed, so he mostly just remembers that John barely looked at him. Except when he left them at the motel, then he looked directly into Dean's eyes, hard as granite, and roughed out, "You're gonna keep your ass in the room this time." There was no *or else* lurking — John knew the order would be followed.

Somehow, thinking about the "Bigfoot" case reminds John of the wendigo they crossed tracks with a few years back, when they had last been running with Lee. That one, Dean remembers. Almost seventeen and burning up with the need, once again, to prove himself to John. More than that, to prove to himself that this was where he belonged.

"Was that your first wendigo, Dean?"

Dean shifts his shoulders back. “First time hunting one with you, yeah.”

They left Sam in the motel for the run of it. Wendigos are dangerous, too dangerous for a thirteen year old.

“You put up a good fight on that one, boy,” John says, nodding to Lee. There had been some kind of internal corruption going on alongside the wendigo. One of the rangers thought the hunters poking around were looking for him — Lee had him down before Dean could even realize he was coming at them. When he helped Lee up from the scuffle, Lee smiled through a bloody nose.

“Thanks, sir,” Lee says, and the way he’s smiling makes Dean’s chest ache. His eyes are all lit up, sharp blue in the humming fluorescents, and he’s looking at John the way Dean looks at John. Except John is looking right back at him, giving him that crooked smile and his eyes are clear and Dean’s chest aches.

“Guy didn’t know what hit him, huh?” Dean adds, just to say something, just to put himself into the world of this conversation.

John laughs a little and nods and his big hand comes up to muss Dean’s hair. It’s not enough but it’s something at least. Dean has to tense his shoulders so he doesn’t lean into the touch. He swallows a scalding mouthful of crappy coffee and looks at Lee.

*

“Dude, would you turn that shit off?” Dean asks, throwing a hand out toward the television. On screen, Jerry Springer is leering into the camera, microphone brandished, riling the audience up about confronting mistresses.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” Lee taunted from where he was sprawled, upside down, on the couch. “Am I offending your high-class aesthetics over there?”

Dean launches a pillow at Lee. He catches it, but the motion makes him loosen his core and he slips to the floor in a heap. “You’re rotting your brain,” Dean says over Lee’s curses. He pads over, just to make sure that Lee hasn’t broken his neck.

“Who says I got a brain to rot?” Lee asks with a grin. His shoulders are mashed up to his ears and his legs are halfway over his head. He looks truly ridiculous, especially since Dean cut his hair last week and it’s

still a little too short.

“You got a point there,” Dean says, rolling his eyes. But he holds out his hand to haul Lee up. Instead, he ends up yanked down, tumbled on the floor next to Lee. “You jackass!” Dean cries, and then they’re wrestling in earnest, crammed between the sagging couch and tiny television set.

They jockey back and forth a few times before Dean gets Lee wedged against the floor, his legs spread and Lee between his knees. He has his hands bracing down on Lee’s shoulders so there’s maybe a couple inches of space between their faces and counting down. Lee’s eyes are closed off though, not giving Dean an answer either way.

Just before Dean moves to press their lips together, Lee tilts his head. “Your dad’s gonna be here any minute, dude.”

Dean checks the clock. John had left a little over an hour ago, to see if he could shake anything from the witnesses. Dean and Lee were still carrying a little too much youth in their faces to pass as authorities, so they stayed behind.

“It’s only been an hour,” Dean reasons, but he keeps his weight back, unsure. It’s only been twice they’ve done this, but both times Lee was onboard and eager. He doesn’t know how to work within this new frame. Dean has never had to beg to get what he wants, not when it comes to making out and sex. “Unless the witnesses are all a bust, there’s no way he’ll be back so soon.”

Lee plants a firm hand against Dean’s chest and shoves. It upsets his balance and Dean rocks back on his heels, leaving Lee the space to get to his feet. “Yeah, well, what if the witnesses are all a bust?” he says, straightening his shirt out. He looks back at Dean and must not be impressed with what he sees because he just rolls his eyes. “Dude,” he says. Slumping back onto the couch, he nudges Dean with his foot. “Don’t be a girl.”

It turns out they’re lucky for Lee’s paranoia because not ten minutes later, John slams through the door in rumpled businessware and a deep frown. He barely passes a look to Lee and Dean, flopped on opposite edges of the couch, blankly watching an episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

“What is it?” Dean asks, sitting up a little straighter.

“The papers didn’t have it totally right,” John hums out, more

thinking aloud than answering the question. “It wasn’t spirits or ghosts coming for the witnesses, just voices. They just heard the person, calling out to them.”

Lee and Dean exchange a look. “Well, look. There isn’t much information on this thing anyway, right?” Lee reasons. A hand scrubs through his hair. “Maybe it can’t actually shapeshift, or - whatever. Project an apparition.”

John shakes his head, though. “Maybe, but it definitely only takes victims two ways - drowning, or tricking them into eating its food.”

Dean cocks his head, waiting, but Lee presses on. “So?”

“So, one of the witnesses I talked to today said that she followed the voice some before snapping out of it. It took her to the quarry, just off I-5.” They came the other way, through Route 20, but Dean remembers seeing the point on the map. John slouches out of the chair, pacing. “I could see if we were landlocked somewhere and it had to adapt, you know. Then I would get it. But we’re surrounded by fucking water. Lakes and rivers and bays.”

“You’re thinking it’s something else,” Dean voices, only because it’s already become clear. He knew the minute his father walked in that he was doubting the direction of the hunt. Frankly, Dean is a little relieved. The prospect of hunting something they hardly knew anything about was wearing on his nerves.

“I dunno,” John says. “What the witnesses said - feels like something I heard of before.”

“Which...means more research,” Lee says, a hint of a wince in his voice.

John looks over at him and Dean is half-expecting him to snap at Lee. Instead, he just smirks a little. “Yeah. But it’ll be no good if you two are hitting the books. I’m sure I’ll be able to fit the pieces together. Just gotta get there.” He taps his temple, then, checks his watch. “We’ll get dinner, for now. Then I’ll get to the library and see what I can dig up, while you two check out the quarry.”

Some little-boy part of Dean jumps at that -- exploring a quarry after dark? Hell *yes*. He looks over to Lee who has the same excitement shining in his eyes.

John is already shrugging out of his suit jacket and loosening his tie.

“We’ll have to load you up, though. Not sure what we’re dealing with so don’t know how to kill it if it ends up being there for ya.”

*

All of Dean’s juvenile explorer excitement has completely drained from his body by the time they get to the quarry. There’s something thrumming in the night around him, something that has him on high alert. When Lee passes him a bowie knife as they’re skulking through the property Dean jumps, jerks back.

“Dude, would you chill out?” Lee laughs. In the dark, Dean can just make out the blue of Lee’s eyes as he rolls them.

“I dunno, man. I just got this feeling—” He checks his gun. He checks his knife and the shotgun with salt and the flask of holy water.

“Your spidey senses are tingling?” Lee wiggles his fingers in Dean’s face, very obviously not taking it seriously. “C’mon. I doubt we’re gonna find anything other than, like...rocks.” As if to demonstrate, Lee kicks at the ground and scatters a spray of gravel.

Dean tries to muster a smile but he can’t think past the buzzing under his skin. Almost ten years of hunting with his dad and he’s started to get a feel for when something is happening, gonna happen. “Yeah, probably,” he agrees anyway.

Then, between breaths, Lee has his back pressed into the chainlink fence that surrounds the premises. It gives a little with the weight of both of them and Dean can feel every line of Lee’s body on his. He tilts his chin, finds Lee looking up at him with hooded eyes. “Don’t tell me you’re scared,” Lee says, under his breath. He laces his fingers through the fence on either side of Dean’s shoulders, pulling him in, and then drags his hips down slow.

“Nuh uh,” Dean breaths out. His hands spasm and then clutch at Lee’s jacket, body bowing into Lee’s like an arc of electricity. They haven’t done this slow. It’s all been frantic and desperate. The gradual pull of Lee’s body against his is unfamiliar, setting his nerves alive — different from the high alert of a few seconds ago.
Lee nuzzles up the line of Dean’s jaw, not kissing just breathing warmly. He spares a few exhales and inhales, then murmurs into Dean’s ear, “I’ll look west, you look east.”

With that he’s gone -- the warm press of his body, the heat of his breath. Dean makes a truly embarrassing sound at the loss and Lee

disappears to the dark. Dean grits out his name and an echo of Lee's laugh is the only answer.

His blood singing from the contact but Dean tries to control himself. Even through Lee's teasing, he can still feel something off, can still feel that sideways twist of something supernatural nearby. He knows it as sure as he knows his name. But in his line of work they run toward the monsters, not away from them. So Dean straightens his jacket, hoists up his flashlight, and takes the east flank.

The quarry is eerie at night, looming in its huge emptiness. Dean's never been to the Grand Canyon but if it's anything like this, he doesn't think he's missing out. He edges far from the rim of the void and continues his search.

The thing is, they're not really looking for anything. Or, they don't know what they're looking for exactly, just something that they know when they see it. Dad hadn't remembered the name of the thing by the time they left so they're just wandering, hoping that they'll see something out-of-place enough to warrant it being a clue. The beam of Dean's flashlight sweeps in wide arcs over pale rock and quiet equipment.

And then, distorted in its bounce against solid rock, Dean hears Lee's voice. He stands still and listens. Over the adrenaline suddenly pouring into his system, he hears it: Lee's voice, calling his name. There's an edge of something excited in Lee's tone. He's found something.

Dean turns and backtracks, toward the middle where they split off. He wants to run, eager to not be alone again, but there are plenty of rocks and pits in the ground that he could trip over so he keeps his feet under him at a solid speed-walk.

"Dean! C'mon, man, I found something!"

Dean rolls his eyes but picks up the pace. "I'm coming! Chill, dude," he calls back.

"Dean!" This call sounds different. Echoing from somewhere else, closer to the trees they drove through to get there. Dean stops, waits. Listens.

"Dean, please!" Lee's voice is sharp now, higher, desperate and scared and coming from all around him. Dean's heart pumps bitterness into his mouth and he squeezes his eyes shut, listening. "Dean! You have to

help me! Dean, please!"

It's coming back from the east, where Dean was, he's sure of it. "Lee!" he shouts back and takes off at a wild run. In his terror, his flashlight hangs by his side, the light bouncing uselessly along rocks and stray grass. For a stretch, all Dean can hear is the pound of his own pulse and his pitched breathing.

And then, clear and calm and cutting through the night: "Dean. Come with me."

It's soft, whispered, but definitely Lee and it stops Dean up short. He blinks, unseeing, and his shoulders settle. *Come with me*.

It could be that simple, couldn't it? Dean wants, desperately. He wants a world where it's just him and Lee. A world where he doesn't hear the thrum of his father's definitions in every fiber of every muscle. He wants a life where he can just sit back, where he doesn't have to run *toward* the thing killing everyone. He wants a life...with Lee, maybe. Or at least some time with him. Dean is twenty-three - he's not daydreaming of a house and a fence and a dog and apple pie, not yet. He sees an open road. He sees out the windshield of his Baby, Lee riding shotgun and singing along in his rough, perfect voice. Led Zeppelin and Lynyrd Skynyrd.

Dean wants to skip between states, stopping only for diner breakfasts and dive bars. He wants to get drunk and hustle pool and play poker and collapse onto cheap beds in cheap motels, with Lee. And, hell, if Lee wants it, Dean figures he could probably even stomach the Grand Canyon.

"Come with me, Dean."

Dean is nodding and stepping forward. He can feel the breeze off the coast of the bay and he imagines it as midwest wind, whipping through prairies and plains. He can see Lee rolling his window down, letting his hand hang out to feel the pressure of the wind against it. He still has his jacket on but he can feel the goosebumps clattering along his arms. He can…

And then he's moving through the air, backward, tumbling feet over shoulders and crashing into the hard-packed ground and another body. His awareness rushes back to him so quickly it makes him dizzy. Plus, he hit his temple on the way down, so that doesn't help.

"What the fuck, man!" Lee's voice. Distraught, like Dean heard before.

Thinking clear now, though, Dean knows that was a trick. All a trick of whatever the fuck they're hunting. He wants to curse at himself (*how could you be so fucking stupid!*) but he knows it wasn't just that the voice was Lee's. There was some kind of trance woven into it, something that reached into him and plucked hard on how much he wanted.

Lee casts Dean in his flashlight, checks his eyes, and, for just a moment, rests his rough palm over Dean's cheek. "All right, man, you're all right," he says, voice a little softer, like gentling a spooked animal. His fingers go to the place where Dean hit his head. Dean flinches away and Lee's hand comes back wet with blood. "Let's get back to the motel, okay? Get you patched up."

Lee helps him up but Dean shrugs off the arm around his shoulders. He exhales, shaky, and stops. Meets Lee's eyes. "I heard it," he says, into the night.

*

"Crocotta!" John says, clapping his hands together as soon as the boys walk through the door. "The minute I saw the name I remembered. It lures people to their death by mimicking the voices of their loved ones, usually dead or estranged." His smile fades a little when he takes in the sight of Lee and Dean. They were a little scuffed up from the fall, and pale besides that. Nothing too bad but there's that cut on Dean's forehead that should be tended to if nothing else.

"What happened?" John asks, voice gone full drill sergeant.

"We ran into it," Lee says, shouldering toward his duffel and digging out the first aid kit. He comes back to Dean and pushes him to sit on the edge of the bed. "Crocotta, you said? Almost got Dean."

Shame floods into Dean's stomach. Of course it would be him that crocotta went after, got the better of. Between him and Lee, he was the obvious choice, the weakest in the pack. The one with so much want welling up in his stomach the crocotta could probably smell it on him. Dean keeps his eyes down so he doesn't have to look at his father, doesn't have to see the disappointment clear over John's face.

"It called to you?" John asks.

Dean nods. Lee sucks his teeth, annoyed at the movement as he tries to clean blood from Dean's forehead. Dean has the small, petty urge to shove Lee's hand away but he resists. John is quiet as Lee fixes Dean

up: peroxide, antibiotic, bandaid. When he moves away to put the kit back together, John's face comes into Dean's view. He can see the careful study in his eyes, the way he's watching his son, like he's trying to figure something out.

"Sammy," Dean blurts out suddenly. "I— That's who it sounded like. It was Sam, telling me he needed me. I… I heard Sam."

The room has gone vacuum still. Lee is looking between John and Dean, hands still tucked into the first aid kit. John is staring at this son, a look on his face that Dean can't really place. Maybe it's the anger of that night that Sam left. Maybe it's the disappointment that Dean knows was there a moment ago. Maybe it's closer to heartbreak.

Whatever it is, John's hands clench on the tabletop and then he stands. Taking his coat off the back of the chair as he goes, he gruffs out, "Gonna find a drink." And then he's gone, out into the night. Dean is thankful, at least, that he doesn't hear the roar of the Impala: Dad's walking, he doesn't have to worry about him drinking and driving.

Lee doesn't move, still looking at the path John cut out the door. His blue eyes are shadowed in the dim lighting. "You told me you heard me, though," he says after a long moment. His voice is rough and he clears his throat. Says again, "You told me that you heard me, at the quarry, calling for you to follow."

And Lee knows that Dean would have had no reason to lie then, terrified and adrenaline-high in the car, hands shaking. Lee knows that Dean lied just now, to his father. Lee *knows*.

Dean doesn't have anything to say. He's too exhausted, too spent, to find even a weak excuse, even a lame joke. He can't do it. Instead, he just shuffles closer to the edge of the bed. Ducking his head, he presses his face into Lee's stomach. Takes in a shuddering breath. The freshly bandaged cut on his temple twinges at the pressure. After a few heartbeats, when Lee doesn't push or pull away, Dean raises his arms and tentatively latches around his waist.

He can still feel the rush of bay breeze on his face. He can still feel the rise of blush on his cheeks, goosebumps up his arms. He can still feel how absolutely certain he was that taking one more step would have brought him home, with Lee. He can still feel the want, taste it.

He doesn't cry into Lee's shirt but it's a near thing, his shoulder jerking with hitched breaths.

Like grace, one of Lee’s hands drops between Dean’s shoulders. The other cups over the back of his head, slowly smoothing back his hair.

Dean breathes.

Chapter End Notes

thanks for reading! i've never really written anything like this before so comments would be much appreciated!
next chapter: the infamous "cult thing in arizona"
rebloggable here!

Chapter 3: two: we lived too long too close

Chapter Notes

> this chapter does include several murders, and a suicide, though not in any detail. please see end notes after the *** for further detail about that and as always, take care of yourself first!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Dean was always wary of working cases on his own. His dad always had to correct him on something, always had to connect the dots for him. But, working with Lee, just Lee? It's pretty amazing. There's no John breathing down their backs so Dean doesn't feel like he's competing with Lee or trying to prove himself every second. And yeah, neither of them really loves the research end of things but it's a lot easier to get through when he can take a break to play some paper football, or to try and get a paper wad into a sleeping Lee's open mouth.

And, look. They don't hold hands and kiss or anything like that but they always share a bed and most morning, when Dean wakes up, Lee is still pressed up against him. It's been going on three months of the push-pull thing that have going, walking a thin line of not wanting more than the other. There have been a few nights, here and there, where Dean has been able to soften his touches, where they kiss longer than just long enough.

One night, just the week before they ended up in Arizona, Lee even kept Dean close after. He had rolled over, like usual, but then he had hooked his arm under Dean and hauled him over his chest and they stayed like that for awhile, just breathing together as the sweat cooled on their skin. It was nice. And then they went to Arizona.

*

Looking back on it, Dean recognizes that things were off with Lee long before they headed out for the cult's headquarters. Most of the investigation had been normal: whole families going missing and then showing up in horrifying tableaus, drained of blood. Dean is back-and-forth over whether this is even their kind of thing, but Lee is convinced from the beginning. "It has to be," he said while stealing Dean's milkshake at dinner their first night in Arizona. They had pushed the crime scene photos aside so they could eat, but Lee waved

a hand at them then. “No human is gonna do that to another person. To a kid.”

So they go through the lore and they trail around town. Local police are all eyebrows up and frowning mustaches about a “cult” that has made this quiet suburb its home. There’s no hard evidence, but everyone in town agrees that Positive Growth Empowerment must be behind the disappearances and eventual murders. They’re not sure why or how, as none of the victims were members, but that’s what the whisper network says.

It takes a little over a week of poking and eavesdropping, but Lee finally cons one of the newer and more naïve members to tell him about a plan the upper-levels have. Something about a Golden Eyed Savior they’re praying too. “Jesus?” Lee asked with a laugh. The girl just smiled and shook her head. “So much more powerful than Jesus.”

Lee comes back with a ducked head and fidgeting hands. “They’re doing it,” he tells Dean. “Sacrifices to prove their worth. And tonight they’re doing the final one, to summon him.”

“So, some kinda demon,” Dean ventures, poking through his journal.

“Yeah. Well- She called it ‘Our Golden-Eyed Savior.’”

Dean hears “Golden Eyes” and his mind goes for one thing. Lee has long known the story of Dean’s mom, of what happened, of the Yellow-Eyed Demon. But when Dean crashes to his feet and announces, “I gotta call, Dad,” Lee gets cagey.

“They said they’re doing the ritual tonight,” Lee says, trailing a little behind Dean. “There’s no way he’ll even get here in time. Why don’t we just waste the thing and then surprise him with the good news.”

“You don’t understand,” Dean shakes his head. “This thing… It’s the whole reason we’re doing this. And no one knows more about it than my dad. I’ll call him, see if there’s anything he can tell us to help, and then he can get his ass on the road. We’ll still go tonight but…” When he looks, Lee’s eyes are cast off to the side, distant. “I gotta tell him, man.”

“Yeah,” is all Lee says.

Once outside, Dean leans against the Impala and calls his father. It goes to voicemail. He hangs up and calls again. Voicemail. He tries one last time and then finally leaves a message. “Hey, Dad,” he says,

neck already soaking from the heat even at six in the evening. “So we’re in Arizona for those missing families you sent us on? Well, it turns out there’s a cult in town and rumor has it they’re into some pretty hinky stuff - like demon worship, human sacrifice stuff. And they’ve got all the things they’d actually need to summon a demon, pretty powerful one. We got some info and we think… Well, the cult leaders keep talking about ‘Our Golden Eyed Savior’ so.”

When he trails back into the motel room, Lee is flipping through Dean’s journal, frowning. “What did he say?” he asks.

“Voicemail.” Dean isn’t sure why he expected John to answer in the first place. He only hopes that his dad gets the message and listens all the way through. He should have gotten to the point sooner, he thinks to himself. Took too long. Even odds that his dad listens to just the first few seconds and then erases the message, just assuming that Dean is being needy. “Guess we’re just stuck with what we already know.

“That’s not nothing,” Lee says, nodding down at the pages where Dean has sketched a rough approximation of a Devil’s Trap. “You got a lot here.”
Dean shrugs a little and then taps the protective circle. “I dunno if that thing even works. I copied it from some demonology book that Bobby Singer had.”

Lee bobs his head a little. “That old badger knows his shit, though.”

Dean grins, thinking of the man he affectionately called “Uncle Bobby” as a boy. It’s been years since Dean has seen him, though, and that last visit ended with Bobby almost shooting John. Literally -- he had the gun in his hand when he said it.

“Anyway, it’s not gonna do us any good. Other than that, all we got is holy water and exorcism.”

“Hey, don’t forget your charm and my good-looks.”

Dean rolls his eyes a little at the toothy grin Lee sends him but it’s the first time he’s smiled in three days. Dean is elated to see it. “Yeah, think you got that backward.”

Lee doesn’t have an answer to that, just closes the journal and meets Dean’s eyes. “Well. Got a few hours before they’re set to get Satanic.”

Dean’s shoulders roll in a shrug. “Maybe we could call Bobby? See if there’s anything else he knows about demons.”

The look Lee sends him goes straight to the base of Dean's spine and tells him that he's not thinking about research plans. "Or."

Dean takes a step forward, the heat flaring low in his gut rising. "Or…?" He tips his head to the side a little and the next thing he knows he's on his back on the bed, laughing, with Lee already pawing at his shirt.

Looking back on it, Dean recognizes that things went wrong in the basement of the headquarters. When they first snuck up and realized that the PGE members had already killed the two small daughters of the latest missing family. Their blood was smeared and spread on the floor, spelling out Latin and symbols, and streaked over sides of the five lit candles. Dean remembers, from the case file, that the daughters were six and nine. Tara and Michelle Porter. Their parents are still alive, shackled to the floor with the five lead members of PGE clumped around them, chanting.

Before Lee could burst in, like Dean knew he wanted to do, the demon was there, possessing the father and it didn't have yellow eyes at all. They were full red, no pupil or iris, just red and it laughed and snapped the neck of the innocent wife. Her name was Erica Porter, Dean remembered.

Chaos reigned for a little bit, as the demon revealed that he wasn't Azazel, but Berith, a demon charged with inciting homicide and chaos.

Dean should have known something was wrong when he had to snap at Lee, take the exorcism pages from his hands and recite the Latin himself. He's the one who holds the cult members at gunpoint and calls the cops. He's the one to put a hand to the weeping father and wait with him. And when the cops arrive, he's the one who explains that they were just driving by and heard screams and walked into the massacre.

Back-up comes and they're leading the cult members out in handcuffs when Dean is finally able to lope over to Lee. "Dude," he says softly, crouching a little to meet Lee's eyes. "What happened back there? You just shut down."

Lee shakes his head a little. Doesn't say anything until Dean claps a hand down on his shoulder. "I just… They killed twelve people, man. Twelve people total, and five of 'em were kids. All 'cause some demon was lying about giving them power and money."

“Demons are fucked up,” Dean says but Lee’s face darkens.

“I’m not talking about demons,” he says, voice strong suddenly. “I’m talking about them. What they did. Humans. People. To other people…”

Before Dean can respond, there’s a commotion off to the side. Some shouts and shuffling. When they look over, Dean can clearly see that the father, Mark Porter, recently possessed and shaken, his family dead, has gotten hold of one of the cops’ guns. He’s sobbing, and he’s holding like the gun like he’s not sure how to use it. “I’m sorry,” he says.

Dean flinches before he even hears the gunshot, casting his eyes away. He knows what has happened without having to look.

*

When they get back to the motel room, Lee won’t look at Dean. There were tears in his eyes the whole ride back and Dean wanted, more than once, to reach across the bench of the Impala and take his hand. He wanted to pull over and tug Lee against his chest, let him cry like they were never allowed to cry on this job. He wanted to pet a hand through Lee’s too-long hair and press his lips into his temple and tell him about what he had seen when the crocotta called to him. A future, him and Lee, on the road and happy.

Instead, he just drove faster.

“Look,” Dean finally says, after they’ve washed up and changed and Lee is pretending to channel surf. “I get it. It’s… It’s not supposed to be people, man. They’re why we’re doing this job. But, like…” He shrugs a little. He’s too young to know what to say, too soft-hearted. “But that’s why we do the job, right? We stop the bad things, whatever they are, and we save people.”

Lee clicks off the television and stares at the blank screen a minute. “We didn’t,” he says. Turning, he meets Dean’s eyes. “We didn’t save anyone tonight.”
“Maybe not. But we sent that demon back to Hell, and I can’t say that’s a bad thing. Yeah, we didn’t save everyone, but we did that. Without us, that thing is walking around, whispering in more peoples’ ears.” Dean moves to Lee’s side and puts a hand on his shoulder. “At the end of the day, that’s gotta be enough, you know?”

Lee doesn’t answer. Just as Dean is about to sigh and pull away, Lee

reaches up. He puts a hand to Dean's cheek and pulls him down. Lee is soft in the kiss but something in that first touch ignites him. Desperate, he reaches for Dean's shoulders and pulls him in closer. Dean goes willingly. He doesn't understand, not entirely, but does know what Lee is doing. And if Dean can be that for him, he will happily.

He ends up between Lee's knees, face hidden into his neck, opening Lee up. They've only done this a few times so far and usually the positions are reversed, but Dean's not picky. And anyway, there's something about being the one looking down at Lee's face. Watching his eyes clench and his mouth bow open. Lee flushes darker than Dean does and he can see the deep red in his cheeks. His hips work down onto Dean's fingers and when he can finally form his words, it's just begging and Dean's name over and over.

They haven't done this at all.

Dean picks his head up and stills his hand and finds Lee's eyes (they haven't done that at all, either). "Yeah?" he asks.

Lee swears, and swears again, and nods jerkily. "Yeah," he says around a swallow. "Yes, please. Yes."

Dean drops forward and kisses him full on the mouth and sets about opening Lee up with more purpose.

Later, after, they're laying awake together. They're side by side, in the same bed, and something is woven through the night air. It feels like he's already in a dream, Dean thinks, like if he talks soft enough the spell will never break.

"D'you know what I think about sometimes?" Dean ventures. His hands are folded over his chest and they're not touching at all, but he knows Lee is looking at him.

"What?" Lee's voice is soft too.

"Y'know, Sammy wants a house and a fence and dog and all but that's never really appealed to me. I've always just wanted the open road, out the windshield of Baby. Singing along to Led Zeppelin and Skynard. Stopping at dives and diners, drinking and hustling pool."

"Living out of motels?"

"Yeah, why not?" And then Dean turns over, onto his side. Lee's eyes

look pale in the night, washed out. The way the shadows are falling over his face, he looks older than he is. “You could come with me, if you wanted.”

Lee doesn’t answer and Dean feels something in his chest heave a little. He tries not to look away but Lee does first, eyes tipping down. Then, slowly, “There’s...things I want,” Lee says. He sounds pained, sounds like something is digging the words out of his chest, through his ribcage. “There’s so much, but I don’t know how --” Cutting himself off abruptly, Lee turns. He turns over, back to Dean, and curls into himself.

Dean doesn’t sleep until he hears Lee’s breathing lengthen out.

They don’t talk, the next morning. The mood is awkward, icy even, and Dean doesn’t know how to hold himself. He’s reminded of the times that John has been mad at him, feeling desperate to make things better, desperate to disappear. Wild for someone to tell him that it’s okay and he can inhale.

Instead, Dean makes himself small. They pack in silence, on opposite sides of the room. When the knock comes, it makes them both jump and with some measure of terror, Dean remembers the voicemail he left for his father.

Sure enough, Lee opens the door and there’s John Winchester. He’s breathless, excited at the prospect of hunting this demon. “Coulda answered your phone, boy,” he shoots off toward Dean.

“Sorry, sir,” Dean says automatically. Checking his phone, he sees several missed calls from his father and one voicemail. It doesn’t matter, now. Haltingly, he apologizes again and explains that it wasn’t the demon after all, some other demon. “We exorcised it, anyway,” he says without explaining further about the cult, about the family, about the aftermath.

“You just let it get away?” John asks, clearly annoyed. “Maybe it knew something about Yellow Eyes. It pretended to be him, Dean, it must know something about him!”

Dean jerks straight, eyes forward. He wants to look to Lee but won’t dare. “I… Right. I’m sorry. I wasn’t thinking, the scene was kind of a mess and things…” He lets the sentence hang and tries not to feel like he’s five-years-old, being scolded for spilling his cereal.

John huffs out a sigh. “Right. Well, maybe you aren’t ready for solo

hunts after all."

Dean wants to protest but before he can, Lee jumps in. "Actually. I got a message from one of the hunters I used to run with. He needs a hand down in the Texas panhandle. I was gonna head out there for a bit."

He doesn't look at Dean once, as he talks. They didn't discuss that, of course. Dean didn't know anything about a hunt in Texas, about one of Lee's old partners, about Lee leaving him, abandoning him, Dean back with his father, without Lee…

Dean watches his father and Lee work out logistics as if he's not there.

"Something we can help you with?" John asks.

"Nah. Don't think it's worth it for all of us to head out."

"Right. Well, you can take the pick-up I lifted to come down here. Some hick up in Wyoming just left the keys under the visor, believe that?"

"Thanks, sir, I appreciate that."

"Sure, sure. Me and Dean have the Impala, anyway." With that, he tosses a set a key over, Lee catches it and hoists his duffel over his shoulder. "Hey, you change your mind and need some help over there, just give Dean a call."

Lee claps a hand on Dean's shoulder and Dean jerks at it. He's smiling and Dean can't his eyes directly. He sets his gaze somewhere over Lee's shoulder. When he was a kid, he would play a game to get himself not to cry. He recites the tracklists of Led Zeppelin albums in his head and only faintly hears when Lee tells him "It's been fun, man. Keep your head on your shoulders."

Dean has only gotten to the B-side of Led Zeppelin II when he hears an engine start outside.

Lee is gone.

John is talking already, too, about a case out in Ohio. "I think we can make it in three days, probably. I hate the thought of being that close to a college, all those kids roaming around. But, the lead on this one seems pretty solid, so at least we won't be going all that way for nothing."

Dean doesn’t say anything. He thinks about the Texas panhandle, about driving there with the windows down and some blues-rock album playing too loud, him and Lee singing along. He thinks about the bed they slept in last night, the packet of lube crumpled somewhere under it. He thinks about, maybe a month ago, waking up to find that Lee hadn’t pulled away in the middle of that night. That they were still pressed together and Dean had thought it was something he could get used to.

“Dean!”

John’s sharp bark pulls him from his daze and he snaps to attention. “Sorry. Yeah, Ohio.” Without another word, he lifts his bag and passes the keys to the Impala over to his father.

Chapter End Notes

> i'm not completely happy with this chapter but i wanted it posted before tomorrow and the new episode! maybe i'll rewrite it ¯_(ツ)_/¯. next/last chapter is 1507 last call, but with insight!
>
> as always, thank you for reading & i'd love to hear what you think!
> rebloggable link
>
> ***
> the case dean and lee are investigating involves a cult murdering families in order to gain a demons favor. in a final ritual, the cult has sacrifices two young daughters of a family. the father is then possessed by the demon who kills the mother. later, the father (no long possessed) kills himself with a cop's firearm. none of this is told in any particular detail but PLEASE do not read if you feel like it would be upsetting in anyway!

Chapter 4: three: call off your ghost

Chapter Notes

> sorry for the wait on this one! i got caught up working on a destiel collab with my pal. if you wanted to check that out, i would love you forever!
>
> brief disclaimer to say that most of the dialogue in this chapter is directly from 15x07: Last Call, so if you recognize it, i didn't write it!

It's the voice that makes Dean look over first. He remembers it crooning out Southern rock with the windows down, or belting drunken karaoke in dive bars and, once, when Dean was shaking with a fever from infection, it whispered through the verses of Hey Jude.

He tells himself it can't be, that he's just imagining things because he's still bitter over his fight with Cas but when he turns to the stage, it is in fact Lee standing center. He's broader in the shoulders and his hair isn't as long, though still shaggy. His face is shining and pink and he's smiling like he's having the time of his life and… Well, it looks like he is. The whole bar is cheering for him and he's high-fiving the band and something twists, low and dark in Dean's stomach. He can't be sure whether it's lust or jealousy.

He starts walking up without thinking, without considering that they didn't part on the best of terms, necessarily. But that was going on almost twenty years ago - they had just been kids. And besides, Dean feels possessed, or ensnared, seeing Lee. When he was with Lee, hunting with Lee, things were simple. It was all wendigos and ghouls and garden-variety creepy-crawlies. There was no cosmic scorecard, no Heaven or Hell on the board yet, no God to consider. There was no destiny yet. He was just a messed up kid, killing monsters, and Lee was the same. Even with how complicated things became between them, that time with Lee was *simple*.

And, fuck, does Dean miss simple.

So he strolls up to Lee and calls him a son of a bitch and there's a split second where he's not certain that he won't get punched. But then they're smiling and laughing and gripping tight to each other and...it's like old times.

And Lee looks at him like… Lee looks at him like he's twenty-three again. Lee looks at him the way he looked at him in that stretch when things were good, really good. When it was just the two of them, tearing through middle America and sometimes Lee would curve his hand over Dean's thigh as they drove.

"You own this place?!" he repeats, hoping it comes out as only joyous disbelief. Because there's definitely a jealous ache locked high in his chest, now. He's seized by a world where they own this place together, retired or not. Because this bar is… He can still remember, in flashes, the dream that Michael kept him in. Rocky's, with it's wood and if he looks fast enough, Lee's Lorna could pass for Pamela Barnes.

She leads them to the bar and Lee tells her "Two beers for us, all right?" and then he claps Dean on the back. "Hang here. I'll be right back." He disappears around the counter just as Lorna sides back, popping two caps off and sliding one to Dean. The other, she settles in front of the stool next to him.
"So, you know Lee?" she asks, leaning against the counter. And despite the smiles and ass-slap earlier, Dean doesn't get the sense that he's being flirted with.

"Yeah. We go way back. Ran together when we were kids, more or less."

"Sounds like y'all got a lot of catching up to do then."

When Dean leans in and smiles, it's mostly rote. "Sure, but not so much. If you got time you could always join us."

Lorna laughs and tosses her dark curls over her shoulder. "Oh, I don't think so, Romeo. I know unfinished business when I see it, and I'm not tryna be a third wheel." She's smiling wide and before Dean can sputter out a denial, she's ducked back out onto the floor.

He swallows thick and watches her go, wondering if she's worked for Lee long, if he might have said something about Dean in passing… But no, that didn't seem like Lee. Which means that she just saw something in the way they interacted. Dean goes warm but it isn't from fear, isn't from the decades-old gut-punch feeling of being clocked. His heart is ratcheting up because he's giddy, because Lorna saw something in the way Lee greeted Dean which means that Dean didn't imagine it.
When Lee gets back, he's just as amped as before. "I cannot believe you're here, man!" He rolls into the stool next to Dean, taking a swig

from his beet. “Of all the gin joints, huh?”

“I walk into the one you own apparently,” Dean says and feels a little off-balance. He wasn’t expected to hash out their breakup (Could you call it a breakup? Could you call it a relationship?), but Lee seems content to breeze past that part of their history, like it never happened. Like they were just any hunting buddies, running into each other. Like they had never been what they were to each other.

Lee laughs again and there’s an edge of panic to it, so maybe he’s not so good at breezing past it after all. The laughter fades and he turns on Dean, turns to him with something sincere on his face. “So, tell me, brother.” Dean braces for the impact but what Lee asks next is, “How’s your old man?”

Dean stalls out on that. Almost immediately he feels like shit because he realizes, in that second, that he hasn’t thought about his father since a few years back, when he had come back to them. “He died,” he tells Lee, voice matter-of-fact and steady. “Thirteen years back.”

And when Lee’s face goes a little slack and soft, when he offers condolences, Dean holds steady still. He can remember, so vividly, sitting next to John and across from Lee and vibrating from the need to prove himself to his father. It was never a rivalry with Sam because Sam never wanted their Dad’s approval in the same way. But Lee and Dean had and, often times, Lee won out.

And it’s been years and Dean has spent more time than he should have thinking about Lee and what happened. He connected the dots of Lee’s distance and John’s proximity, that his father and his attitude probably contributed to Lee’s hesitance in them being together. It’s not rocket science, after all.

He’s older now, so it hurts a little less to admit, “He always liked you. In fact, he said that he'd never seen anybody better in a fight, and that is high praise coming from my old man.”

Lee raises his bottle to John Winchester and a strange bubble of anxiety fills in Dean’s chest.

He hasn’t examined all his daddy issues, not at all, and he would still likely defend the man with his dying breath, but it feels wrong to hear Lee do the same. He wishes, childishly, that Lee would have laughed and said, *“I always hated that crusty bastard,”* instead. Just to validate a little of that open wound that Dean had walked around with for so long.

So Dean switched topics and in doing so toes a little closer to their history. Says, “I don’t think I’ve seen you since Sammy was in college.” As if he doesn’t remember the last time exactly, as if he can’t still picture, exactly, Lee walking out of the motel room. He keeps his eyes down, coy, waiting to see if Lee will call his bluff.

He doesn’t.

But then.

“You remember that cult thing we did in Arizona?”

Dean won’t look him in the eye but he’s pretty sure Lee isn’t seeing him right now anyway. Of course he remembers Arizona. Remembers Lee’s stunned eyes, the haunted look in them. Remembers the way he had held his breath so he wouldn’t cry as Dean drove them back to the motel. Dean remembers that it was Lee who pulled him in close that night, that Lee turned to him in his fear and uncertainty and hopelessness. And he remembers being the one standing there, alone, in the aftermath.

“Yeah, I remember,” is all he ends up saying.

Lee nods a little and explains, “Yeah. Well, I did one more case after that, right around here, and... I decided that wasn't the life for me anymore. I scrounged up what I could, and I bought this joint. Living the dream.”

That’s where Lee was heading, all those years back, he remembers Lee telling his father about an old hunting partner asking for help in the Texas panhandle… Here they are.

“Let me ask you something.” Dean’s heart is in his throat and he can’t look away from Lee’s mouth, from the shine of beer left over at the bow of his top lip. “You ever regret it?” he asks and he forces himself to look at Lee’s eyes, forces Lee to meet his gaze. “Walking away?”

The pause that follows is charged. They both know what Dean is asking, what he’s really asking. Because before Lee walked away from the job, he walked away from Dean. He walked out of that motel room, out of Dean’s life and then he walked out of hunting and here he is now, living Dean’s dream life. All while Dean is stuck—

Dean doesn’t even know how to categorize what he’s doing. What he’s been doing for the past who-knows how many years.

“Not once,” Lee says. His eyes are bright blue in the bar lights but he can only hold Dean’s look for another second before he looks down at the counter. His fingers trail through a ring of condensation and for a minute, Dean thinks he’s stopped breathing.

It’s almost twenty years old, but it’s a wound that still hurts.

“You remember when your dad caught us drinking on the job?” Lee asks, and he’s laughing but it’s forced. “We were in...fuck, one of the Dakotas. Remember?”

Dean makes himself laugh, too, and then nods. Hooks a finger around the neck of his beer and finishes it in one swallow. “That was some shitty whiskey we had then,” he says. He can still remember the taste of it, from Lee’s tongue. “Speaking of…” Dean turns and makes a show of searching for Lorna because he’s suddenly in desperate need for the burn of shots.

*

Dean limps out of the bar, past the window Lee boarded up just hours ago. His head is spinning, dizzy from the blood loss and the fight and all the alcohol. His heart is pounding through adrenaline and he can’t stop the panic breathing that’s taxing his lungs. So he sits, right there, in the middle of the front lot. The night air is cooling around him but all he can smell is the blood.

He closes his eyes and let his head tip back a little. Unbidden, a memory of a fantasy comes to him. Flying down some country road in the Impala, Lee shotgun, both of them singing at the top of their lungs to Lynyrd Skynard. Young and immortal, forever. He rides through the hitch in his breathing and lets the fantasy play out.

Him and Lee on the road together, giving up hunting together. Getting real jobs and saving money the honest way and buying a bar together. Laughing with their regulars and singing good old hits up on stage together and then… Going home together. Sharing a bed that isn’t in a motel, waking up to Lee not having rolled away in the night. Having a home. Having a life. Having a future. Never worrying about God, never worrying about destiny. Never meeting an angel with a riot of dark hair and eyes that glow blue and a heart so big it scares Dean daily.

He counts his breaths until he gets to twenty-four and then he starts over again and then he turns his phone on. It buzzes to life immediately, texts and missed calls and voicemails rolling in. His

heart stutter stops and he steels himself against the headache coming on because he can already tell he's going to have to drive all five hours home in a straight shot.

The first voicemail he listens to is the last one Cas left, a few hours ago. All he hears is "Sam is hurt" before he hauls himself up to the Impala and starts the engine. Back to the present, to his responsibilities, his duties, back to his family.

End Notes

rebloggable post here!

thanks so much for following along on this little passion project of mine! i hope you enjoyed it and if you did, please let me know in the comments! :)

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!